

## Four Students Talk Their Way Into Friday's Presidential Debate

Contributed by Rebecca Lauck Cleary  
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Two students also win \$500

OXFORD, Miss. - A month of preparation by four students has culminated in seats at the first presidential debate of 2008, to be held Friday night at the University of Mississippi.

On Monday night in the Overby Center, the two-person team of James Hoggatt of Brookhaven and Arianne Kiesel of Mandeville, La., won tickets to the debate and \$500 each from the Dean of Students Office and Office of Greek Life. Second-place winners Dion Kevin of Oxford and Abby Loden of Mantachie also won tickets to the debate.

Arianne Kiesel of Mandeville, one of the winners of \$500 and a ticket to the first presidential debate of 2008. UM photo by Nathan Latil

The teams competed on the randomly drawn topic "Should the U.S. encourage a free Pakistan government, which might not be friendly, or a friendly Pakistan government, which might not be free?"

The groups were ready for any of five issues to be selected and were judged on creative reasoning and use of evidence, style, mechanics of delivery, clarity and solutions. Preliminary rounds in the competition involved 11 two-member teams, with semi-finals held on Saturday.

"I am still stunned; I am so honored and excited," said Kiesel, a freshman journalism major. "I have gotten so much out of this, even if I hadn't won. I am very excited to go to the debate and go into it knowing so much more about the debate process."

Some two dozen students enrolled this semester in a debate-style class, which was a one-hour credit practicum intended to prepare students to research, write and argue issues.

Hoggatt, who has been involved in debate since eighth grade, said he is still in shock.

"I am beyond excited. It meant so much to win this competition," the sophomore philosophy major said. "And I would like to thank Carol Clanton of Brookhaven High School for making me the speaker and debater I am today."

James Hoggatt of Brookhaven, one of the winners of \$500 and a ticket to the first presidential debate of 2008. UM photo by Nathan Latil

JoAnn Edwards, director of forensics for UM's Lott Leadership Institute, came up with the idea for the class and worked with the campus Presidential Debate Committee and Dean of Students Office to make it happen.

She said she enjoyed the humor that both teams brought to the debate, which was filed by Mississippi Public Broadcasting.

"I am most proud of the fact that these are kids from so many walks of life but look how they spoke about issues," Edwards said. "These are the constituents our candidates are having to impress - they are smart and articulate. It was everything I thought it would be."

For more information on the presidential debate or related events, go to <http://debate.olemiss.edu> .

Dion Kevin of Oxford, a second place winner, received a ticket to the first first presidential debate of 2008. UM photo by Nathan Latil